



State of Tennessee
Department of State
Tennessee State Library and Archives
403 Seventh Avenue North
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0312

**GOVERNOR JOSEPH McMINN
PAPERS
1815-1821**

(GP 6)

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SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The McMinn administrations were marked with some small attention to the matters leading up to Indian removal, the extinction of treaties with the contiguous tribes, and the formulation of new treaties to take into account increases in the White population.

An interesting but minor piece of correspondence is that between Governor McMinn and certain parties relative to the delivery of presentation swords to Major Generals Andrew Jackson and Edmund Pendleton Gaines, in recognition of distinguished service during the War of 1812. The services of General Gaines had been conspicuous in the campaigns of the Northwest, where the military achievements of American forces had been less than creditable.

Some concern was also reflected at the entrance from neighboring states of an inordinate number of “free persons of color”, apparently drawn by the attractive social climate which the State was quick to attempt to erase.

There seems to have been more than the usual number of jail-breaks, which may have been one of the reasons why the Governor initiated measures for the provision of a state penitentiary. Crime and punishment became more sophisticated. There was one of two cases of fraud, contempt of court, etc. on the one hand; and on the other, there was a tendency to reduce the amount of corporal punishment, as well as to ameliorate the severity of chargeable crimes and their punishment.

Some attempts were made to adjust the boundaries between the states of Kentucky and North Carolina- with little success.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Governor Joseph McMinn

- 1758 Born in West Marlborough Township, Chester County, Pennsylvania to Quaker parents.
- 1785 May 9th, married Hannah Cooper (died 1811); moved to Hawkins County, future State of Tennessee the following year.
- 1790 Appointed to a county office by Territorial Governor William Blount; begins political career.
- 1794 Member of the Territorial Legislature, representing Hawkins County.
- 1796 Member of the State Constitutional Convention; chosen to carry a copy of the State Constitution to the U.S. Secretary of State, Timothy Pickering in Philadelphia.
- 1805-1809 Served three successive terms as Speaker of the Senate.
- 1812 Marries Rebecca Kincade (d. 1815) on January 5th.
- 1815 Elected Governor of Tennessee for his first term. He was re-elected in 1817 and 1819.
- 1818 The Great Chickasaw Cession occurs, that transfers to Tennessee the largest single cession of land ever to take place in the State's history.
- ca. 1818 Marries Nancy Williams, a marriage which eventually ends in divorce.
- 1823 Appointed United States Agent to the Cherokee Nation.
- 1824 Dies on November 17th; buried near Calhoun, Tennessee.
- 1942 A portrait of Governor McMinn is discovered in Philadelphia; the painting was made in 1796, by Rembrandt Peale; when McMinn delivered the State Constitution to the Federal Government. The Tennessee Historical Society purchases the painting for the State.

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